

NEWS WRAP

AGD

GOA IS INDIA'S LARGEST exporter of iron ore, and the second largest producer of the mineral. India produces 220 metric tons of iron ore, worth Rs 34,800 crore annually, of which 100 metric tons are exported. Goa alone accounts for over 55 metric tons of exports, and the state's earnings from iron ore exports are valued at around Rs 17000 crore annually. Of the state's 336 iron ore mining leases, about 90 are functional. The Goa government earns around Rs 966 crore in royalty from iron ore miners annually. However, the illegal mining scam running in Goa is estimated at Rs 25,000 crore. In the name of movement of dumps, iron ore is being exported illegally. A higher quantity of iron ore is being extracted, beyond the limits allowed under environment clearance norms. Lease area violations are occurring owing to placement of dumps outside lease areas. About half of the mines in Goa have been violating environmental norms. With independent traders operating in the region, numerous irregularities have entered the system. In Oct 2011, Goa State Government had banned the movement of dumps. Over 700 metric tons of iron ore, valued at thousands of crores of rupees, are piled up in and around Goa mines. Reports on large scale illegal mining and violations of environmental norms in Karnataka led to the Supreme Court in July 2011 to ban mining and exports in Karnataka. Goa produces 35 metric tons of iron ore, but has been exporting nearly 55 metric tons, the balance of 20 metric tons coming from low grade dumps. Goan miners are unable to switch supplies to steel mills within India, as there are no takers for the naturally *inferior grade Goan Ore*. The outcome of the commission report, headed by retired Supreme Court judge, M B Shah enquiring into the large scale allegations of illegal mining in Goa, will affect the job prospects of thousands of mine workers, and truck and jetty/barge operators. The costs of transporting ore from mines to jetties, for exports through barges, is comparatively less than road transportation.

GOVERNANCE IN WEST BENGAL

Suspected Maoists have abducted a number of ration dealers in West Bengal's Purulia and Bankura districts, for agreeing to distribute rice at Rs 2 a kg among the tribals. Now the state food and supplies department is using police co-operatives for distribution. Prospective ration dealers are in panic, and are no longer willing to accept government offers. Dealers have been abducted in Maoist-hit Baghmundi and Arsha blocks (Purulia) and Sarenga and Raipur blocks (Bankura). As most of the tribals, who live in remote areas, are too poor to travel to draw rations from existing outlets, the police co-operatives will make available the rations to the tribals from special outlets, at their doorsteps.

Year 2011 has been bad for farmers in West Bengal. Price of fertilisers have doubled since April 2011. Jute and rice harvests have suffered heavy losses. Bt crops and attack of insects due to climate change generated fears. While it costs Rs 3000 to cultivate one quintal of jute, it is being currently sold for Rs 1700. Since rice harvests of 2010 are still stocked in godowns, rice mills refuse to take new harvests. Some potato farmers have committed suicide.

NEPAL MAOIST COMBATANTS

Recently the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Madhesi parties settled the future of 19,602 Maoist combatants. After a political deadlock of more than three years, Nepal's political parties have agreed to integrate a maximum of 6500 fighters into the Nepal Army (NA), and provide rehabilitation and cash packages to the rest. The former combatants are being integrated in a newly created special directorate under the Nepal Army, which includes NA soldiers and personnel from other security forces. The special directorate is responsible for development works, industrial security, forest security and disaster relief. After fulfilling norms of the Nepali Security Force, the Maoist combatants are integrated on an individual basis. Flexibility is allowed on age, marital status, and educational qualifications. Norms of the security organs govern the grant of ranks. The combatants are being provided bridging and educational courses. Combatants who opt for voluntary retirement are sanctioned grants between \$6300 and \$10,000 (approx), depending on their ranks. Those who prefer rehabilitation are granted between \$7600 and \$11,400 (approx). The Nepal government is seizing Maoist weapons. The Maoists are returning property confiscated during the insurgency. Under the power sharing agreement, the Nepali Congress would lead the government and elections would be held after the Constitution is promulgated. However, a faction of the Maoists, led by vice-chairman Mohan Vaidya 'Kiran' is opposing the deal, describing it as "anti-people".

BRITAIN'S JOB CHARTIES

The British government's new work programme are hindering voluntary organizations that help young people into jobs of the government's New Work Programme. The National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) is aggrieved that youth services are being cut. Many smaller charities that have helped young adults into jobs are now under threat from local council cuts and through losing the contracts that they had under previous government work programmes. About 75% of Britain's youth organizations have had to cut services in 2011, after being deprived of funding. Only two of the 18 contractors chosen by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were voluntary bodies. Most charitable organizations are unable to meet the initial criteria of needing an annual turnover of 20 million pound, and the capacity to fulfil large contracts, which require a big cash flow. □□□